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Cosmopsychism, Micropsychism and the Grounding Relation

Panpsychism is the view that consciousness is fundamental and ubiquitous. The most promising form of panpsychism is *constitutive panpsychism*, which we can define as follows:

Constitutive panpsychism – O-consciousness (the ‘ordinary’ or ‘organic’ consciousness we pre-theoretically associate with humans and other animals) is *not* fundamental but is grounded in a more fundamental form of consciousness which is ubiquitous throughout nature.¹

Constitutive panpsychism is most commonly construed as a ‘bottom-up’ view:

Constitutive Micropsychism – All facts – including the facts about o-consciousness – are grounded in consciousness-involving facts at the micro-level.²

However, there is increasing attention being given to the ‘top-down’ version of constitutive panpsychism:

Constitutive Cosmopsychism – All facts – including the facts about o-consciousness – are grounded in consciousness-involving facts concerning the universe.³

People still have a giggle when they hear about conscious electrons or the consciousness or the universe. But those who are genuinely interested in finding a place for consciousness in the natural world ought to appreciate that there is a case to be made for the view. We can see the contemporary mind-body problem as the following dilemma:

- There are strong empirical reasons for doubting dualism: If there were fundamental mental properties in or associated with the brain that regularly impacted on the physical processes that govern behaviour, then this would show up in our neuroscience. We would find physical changes in the brain that have no physical cause. The fact that we don’t find brain

¹ The term ‘constitutive panpsychism’ is from Chalmers (2015), although I define it slightly differently here.

² Galen Strawson (2006) defines ‘micropsychism’ in a slightly different way, in order to capture the difference between those who think that some micro-level entities are conscious and those who think all are. I am interested here in a different distinction – that between top-down and bottom-up conceptions of panpsychism – and my definition of ‘micropsychism’ reflects this.

³ Shani (2015), Nagasawa & Wager (2016), Goff (2017), Albahari (Forthcoming).

events that can't be explained in terms of physical laws constitutes a strong and ever growing inductive case against dualism.⁴

- There are strong *philosophical reasons* for doubting physicalism: The physical facts about my body and brain can wholly account for my conscious experience only if those physical facts necessitate the facts about my conscious experience. If the physical facts about my brain necessitate the facts about my conscious experience, then there is no possible world in which there is a functioning body and brain physically identical to my own but in which there is no consciousness. And yet there is good reason to think that such a world is conceivable, in the sense of being rationally coherent, and this gives us good reason to think that such a world is possible.

By offering a non-physicalist reduction of human consciousness, constitutive panpsychism offers hope of avoiding this dilemma altogether. Of course there are thoughtful and challenging objections to constitutive panpsychism but anyone who rejects the view simply because 'it's a bit weird' is not serious about the project of trying to find out what reality is really like.

A crucial element in the definition of constitutive panpsychism is the *grounding relation*. In this paper I want to get clearer on what constitutive panpsychism is by examining what the grounding relation is. I will try to show that constitutive micropsychism and constitutive cosmopsychism involve very different conceptions of the grounding relation, and that as a result the constitutive micropsychist but not the constitutive cosmopsychist is committed to a deflationary view of o-consciousness. I conclude on the basis of this that cosmopsychism is the more plausible form of constitutive panpsychism.

(I will only be concerned here with constitutive forms of panpsychism, and so in what follows I will refer to constitutive micropsychism simply as 'micropsychism' and constitutive cosmopsychism simply as 'cosmopsychism').

What is Grounding?

From the 1930s onwards there was great deal of hostility to the project of metaphysics in analytic philosophy. At some point in the 1970s, with no explanation as to why it had become acceptable, people started doing metaphysics again, and today most departments in the analytic tradition have active engagement with the subject. More recently many analytic metaphysicians have gravitated towards the use of an extremely traditional vocabulary, involving primitive notions such as *essence*

⁴ See Papineau 2001.

and *fundamental being*.⁵ One such primitive notion which has received a great deal of attention in the literature is the *grounding relation*.⁶

The grounding relation is taken to be a *non-causal explanatory relation* that holds between facts.

The prima facie need for such a relation is given by reflection on examples:

- There is a party at Jane's *in virtue of* the fact that Rod, Jane and Freddy are reveling at Jane's.
- The rose is red *in virtue of* the fact that the rose is scarlet.
- There is a table at location L *in virtue of* the fact that atoms are arranged table-wise at L.

The italicised phrase in the above examples seems to express an explanatory relationship: the party exists *because* Rod, Jane and Freddy are revelling, the rose is red *because* it's scarlet. But this explanatory relationship is not causal: Rod, Jane and Freddy's revelling does not bring into being a new entity – the party – that floats above their heads; the scarlet colour does not secrete redness as the liver secretes bile. Hence we seem to have a non-causal but explanatory relationship; and this we call 'grounding'.

What more can we say about grounding relationships? Intuitively in cases of grounding the product is *nothing over and above* the producer: we want to say that there is 'nothing more' to the fact that there is a party than the fact that certain people are revelling, or that the former 'wholly consists' in the latter. Indeed, this seems to be what distinguishes grounding relationships from causal relations; for in causal relations new individuals and properties are brought into being, e.g. conception produces a child, match striking produces fire.

How can some fact X be 'nothing over and above' something other fact Y? A natural first thought would be that this is because X and Y are one and the same fact, i.e. they are identical. Thus, it is natural to try to analyse 'nothing over and above' talk in terms of identity:

The Identity Analysis (of 'nothing over and above' talk) – X is nothing over and above Y iff X is identical with Y.

However, the above examples of grounding are not plausibly construed as cases of identity, at least if we assume:

The Necessity of Identity – If X is identical with Y then X could not possibly exist without Y.

⁵ Lewis 1983, Fine 1994, Sider 2012.

⁶ Schaffer 2009, Rosen 2010.

The Necessity of Identity is extremely plausible. For X to be identical with Y is for X and Y to be one and the same thing; and nothing can exist without itself.

Why does the acceptance of the Necessity of Identity lead to the falsity of the Identity Analysis? Call the fact that there is a party at Jane's 'the party fact' and the fact that Rod, Jane and Freddy are revelling 'the RJF fact'. The party fact could exist without the RJF fact, e.g. if Rod and Freddy leave and their revelry is replaced by that of Ken and Clare. It follows by the Necessity of Identity that the party fact cannot be identical with the RJF fact. Hence the Identity Analysis fails, at least in this case and any other case in which the fact that is grounded could obtain in the absence of the fact that grounds it.

We now seem to be left with a *prima facie* paradox. It's hard to make sense of the idea that X is *identical with* Y and yet X is *nothing over and above* Y. It seems almost tautological that if X is *not* Y then X is *something more than* Y. Thus, to make sense of the grounding relation we need to give some account that removes this *prima facie* paradox by clarifying how we can have nothing-over-and-above-ness obtaining between non-identical facts. I call this the 'free lunch constraint' on an adequate theory of grounding.⁷

There seem to me two options for satisfying the free lunch constraint, which lead to two distinct forms of the grounding relationship. I will consider each of these in turn in the following two subsections.

Grounding by Truthmaking

One influential way of making sense of 'nothing over and above' talk, developed by John Heil amongst others, focuses on truthmaking.⁸ In Heil's view, a great error in twentieth century metaphysics was the Quinean orthodoxy of reading off ontology from the entities quantified over in the sentences we take to be true. In this framework, avoiding an ontological commitment to Xs requires avoiding quantifying over Xs, or at least analysing sentences involving quantification over Xs into sentences not involving quantification over Xs. Contra this Quinean tradition, Heil thinks that ontology should focus not on the entities quantified over in our truths, but on the entities that serve as truthmakers for such truths. By holding for example that truths about tables are made true by states of affairs involving particles being arranged in certain ways – arranged 'table-wise' as philosophers tend to say – we avoid an ontological commitment to tables.

⁷ The name is inspired by David Armstrong's term 'the ontological free lunch'

⁸ Heil 2003, 2012; Cameron 2008, 2010; Horgan & Potrč 2008.

Proponents of the truthmaking approach often talk as though non-fundamental entities do not exist, saying for example that ‘in reality’ there are no tables only table-wise arrangements of particles. But if the view is that table-wise arrangements of particles make it true that there are tables, we seem on the face of it to have a contradiction. If it is true that there are tables then there are tables, which is obviously inconsistent with there being no tables.

Suppose the truthmaker theorist avoids this contradiction by accepting that tables fully exist. It now becomes hard to see how truthmaking can help us to make sense of the thesis that the table is ‘nothing over and above’ the fact that particles are arranged table-wise (or whatever ‘nothing over and above’ thesis we happen to be focusing on). We are wanting clarification of the relationship between two facts in concrete reality – the fact that there is a table and the fact that particles are arranged table-wise – and it’s not clear how mentioning a relationship between one of those facts and an abstract proposition (or a linguistic sentence) helps with this. Perhaps we could say that the fact that particles are arranged table-wise makes true the proposition <there is a table>, and that the existence of the table somehow arises from the truth of that proposition. But this gets the priority between being and truth the wrong way round: propositions are representations of reality, and hence their truth is dependent on what facts obtain in reality rather than vice versa.

The only way I can see around these difficulties for the truthmaker approach is to combine it with what we might call ‘metaphysical elitism’. According to the metaphysical elitist, not all objects and properties are equals: some are *metaphysically privileged*, part of *Reality as it is in and of itself*. Theodore Sider is a prominent proponent of this view.⁹ On his version the privileged structure of reality is captured in the ‘Book of the World’: the true and complete description involving only concepts which ‘carve nature at the joints.’ All other truths have ‘metaphysical truth-conditions’, i.e. specified in the metaphysically privileged language (i.e. the language involving only terms which carve nature at the joints) and satisfied by metaphysically privileged facts.

Combining the truthmaker account with metaphysical elitism provides a way of avoiding the contradiction of saying that tables don’t exist even though <tables exist> is true: it is false in the metaphysically privileged language that ‘tables exist’ but it is true in a common or garden language like English that ‘tables exist’. Tables exist, but they are not part of the metaphysically privileged structure of reality; tables are not part of Reality as it is in and of itself. This yields a clear sense in which tables are ‘nothing over and above’ facts about particles: facts about tables do not add to the metaphysically privileged structure of reality.

⁹ Sider 2012.

Some may be suspicious of the idea of a primitive notion of metaphysical privilege, and so I have provided an index in which I try to demystify the idea. To briefly summarise, it is plausible that we have a basic, simple notion of existence or reality – the notion we employ when we ask whether God exists, for example – and this is the notion we are ultimately interested in as theorists of reality. We can call this notion of existence ‘basic’ or ‘privileged’. However, we use existence language for all kinds of purposes and these extended uses create a secondary notion of existence. Things that exist in this secondary sense are mere shadows cast by the structure of our language. Parties ‘exist’ in a sense, but only in the sense that we use talk of parties ‘existing’ to express facts about people revelling. Parties do not ‘exist’ in the sense of existence we are interested in when we are trying to find out what Reality is like.¹⁰

Thus, although truthmaker grounding gives us a good sense in which grounded facts are nothing over and above grounded facts, it does so at the cost of giving a deflationary account of non-fundamental individuals and properties. On the truthmaker + metaphysical elitism approach to grounding (which is in my view the only plausible version of truthmaker grounding) non-fundamental individuals and properties ‘exist’ in the lightweight sense that talk of their existing plays a role in ordinary language. But they do not ‘exist’ in the sense we are interested in when we conduct metaphysical enquiry into the nature of Reality.¹¹ At best talk of their existence plays the role of communicating facts about the privileged existence of some other kinds of thing.

Grounding by Subsumption

I turn now to the second way in which I believe we can make sense of ‘nothing over and above’ talk.

Philosophers tend to think that facts about big things are grounded in facts about little things: the table exists and is the way it is because its smallest bits exist and are the way they are. Sam Coleman calls this view ‘smallism’.¹² However, over the last eight years or so Jonathan Schaffer has conducted a rigorous and wide-ranging defence of a view he calls ‘priority monism’, which turns smallism on its head. For the priority monist, facts about little things are grounded in facts about big things: the smallest bits of the table exist and are the way they are because the table as a whole exists and is the

¹⁰ My characterisation of the notion of privileged existence differs from that of Sider.

¹¹ As metaphysicians we may also be interested in giving an account of things that have secondary existence. For example, Humean metaphysicians may want to give an account of causation, despite denying that causal facts participate in the privileged structure of reality. The point of such activity is to analyse concepts that are significant to human beings and should be distinguished from the project of trying to understand Reality as it is in and of itself.

¹² Coleman 2006.

way it is. Ultimately all facts are grounded in facts about the biggest thing: the universe. According to priority monism the universe is the one and only fundamental thing.

A distinctive form of the grounding relation obtains in the context of priority monism. Schaffer characterises it as follows:

...the monist may offer a general conception of the partialia as abstract, in the etymologically correct sense of being a partial aspect. Wholes are complete and concrete unities. Parts may be conceived of as aspects of wholes, isolated through a process what Bradley describes as “onesided abstraction.” The priority of the one whole to its many parts is thus of a piece with the priority of the substance to its modes, both being instances of the general priority of the concrete entity to its abstract aspects.¹³

I call this ‘grounding by subsumption’, which we can define as follows:

X grounds by subsumption Y iff Y is a partial aspect of X

This is not an incredibly helpful definition, as the notion of ‘subsumption’ and the notion of an ‘aspect’ are closely inter-defined. However, I think we can get a grip on the notion of grounding by subsumption by reflecting on instances of it. I will briefly outline three:

Grounding by subsumption between experiences

Consider your total determinate conscious experience right now. In some sense it has ‘parts’: visual experience of colours, auditory experience of sounds, emotional experience of joy as you read this stimulating text. One might suppose that the whole experience is a bundle of these smaller experiences, tied together with the relation of co-consciousness. However, another option, to my mind more natural, is to suppose that the whole experience is more fundamental, subsuming the smaller experiences as aspects. Bayne and Chalmers (2003) defends such a view.

Grounding by subsumption between a substance and its properties

In the above quotation Schaffer alludes to the fact that grounding by subsumption offers an attractive model of the relationship between an object and its properties. There is an old and well known difficulty, known in more recent philosophy as ‘Bradley’s regress’, of how to account for the relationship between an object and its properties without involving oneself in vicious regress. Suppose we start with the aim of accounting for the connection between a ball and its red colour. A natural starting assumption is that we should explain the connection between the ball and redness

¹³ Schaffer 2010: 47.

in terms of the relation of *instantiation* that holds between them. But now the question is: what connects the ball to the instantiation relation? If we need a relation to connect the ball to redness, then surely we also need a relation instantiation* to connect the ball to the instantiation relation that connects it to redness. And if we need a relation of instantiation* to connect the ball to the instantiation relation that connects it to redness, surely we also need a relation of instantiation** to connect the ball to the relation of instantiation* that connects it to the instantiation relation that connects it to redness. And so on ad infinitum. The ultimate explanation of the connection between the ball and its colour is continually deferred and never given.

A promising way around this difficulty, defended by D. M. Armstrong and C. B. Martin among others, is to suppose that at the fundamental level we find not objects and properties somehow 'glued together', but rather *objects-having-properties* (you have to say it really quickly!) or states of affairs.¹⁴ The state of affairs of *the ball-being-red* is a unity more fundamental than either the ball or its redness; both the ball and its redness exist as aspects of that more fundamental unity. When God created the world she didn't create electron E, an instance of negative charge, and then glue them together. Rather she created *e-having-negative-charge*; both the electron and the instance of negative charge being aspects of that more fundamental unity.

(Rather than thinking of the view in terms of states of affairs, I prefer to construe it in terms of *propertied objects*. On such a view, rather than creating the state of affairs of *electron-e-having negative charge*, God created a specific *negatively-charged-electron*, a fundamental unity that subsumes a given instance of negative charge.¹⁵ Which view one goes for depends on whether one thinks the world is fundamental made up of facts or things.)

Grounding by subsumption between substantival space and its regions

The central debate in the philosophy of space is between substantivalists and relationists. Substantivalists believe that space (or spacetime) is a fundamental kind of thing in its own right: the great container in which all material objects are held. Relationists believe that at the fundamental level there are only material objects, related in various complex ways: facts about space are grounded in facts about material objects and the relationships they bear to each other.

How should the substantivist construe the grounding relationship between space (or spacetime) and its regions? I suppose one might adopt a kind of 'spatial atomism', according to which space as a whole is built up of its very small regions of space. But it is much more natural, or at least an option,

¹⁴ Martin 1980, Armstrong 1997.

¹⁵ Lowe 2000 defends a view close to this.

to suppose that the whole of space is fundamental and that the regions of space are aspects subsumed within that unity.

Grounding by subsumption is a primitive notion but I think it is one that we can get a grip on through reflection on the above examples. And grounding by subsumption gives us a clear understanding of how it can be that (A) X is not identical with Y, and yet nonetheless (B) X is nothing over and above Y. My current red experience is nothing over and above my total conscious experience because my current red experience is one aspect of my total visual experience. The redness of the ball is nothing over and above the state of affairs of the ball's-being-red because the redness is one aspect of that state of affairs. A specific region of space is nothing over and above space as a whole because that region is one aspect of the whole of space. In each case, the reality of the whole subsumes the reality of the aspect.

We can now note a crucial difference between the two forms of grounding we have considered. Accounting for nothing-over-and-aboveness via grounding by truthmaking essentially involves committing to a deflationary view of non-fundamental entities or properties. For on the truthmaking account non-fundamental properties and entities are 'nothing over and above' fundamental properties and entities in the sense that they do not add to the metaphysically privileged structure of reality; all and only fundamental entities are part of Reality as it is in and of itself. Non-fundamental objects and properties are mere shadows cast by the structure of our language.

In contrast, accounting for nothing-over-and-aboveness via grounding by subsumption need *not* involve a commitment to a deflationary view of non-fundamental entities or properties. My current red experience is 'nothing over and above' my current total experience in the sense that it is an aspect of that total experience; the total experience subsumes the red experience within its being. And therefore we do not need to deny that the red experience participates in the privileged structure of reality in order to make sense of its 'not adding' to the total experience; we can consistently hold that both the total experience and its various aspects are parts of Reality as it is in and of itself.

There are other proposals in the literature for how to account for nothing-over-and-aboveness in the absence of identity; I have argued elsewhere that none is satisfactory.¹⁶ And given the *prima facie*

¹⁶ Goff 2017: chapter 2. In fact I outline in this chapter a form of grounding – grounding by analysis – that sounds different from grounding by truthmaking. As I'm now thinking about these matters, the combination of truthmaking and metaphysical elitism is not inconsistent with grounding by analysis, rather the former offers us a deeper account of the latter. Why think a deeper account of grounding by analysis is required? I think

paradoxical character of nothing-over-and-aboveness in the absence of identity – how can X be *not* Y and yet *nothing more than* Y? – it does seem that some account is required which removes this paradoxical character. Thus, I will tentatively suppose in what follows that grounding must be one or other of the two forms I have outlined above.

Micropsychism and Cosmopsychism

Micropsychists attribute very basic consciousness to fundamental micro-level entities, perhaps electrons and quarks. They then take facts about o-consciousness, i.e. the kind of consciousness we associate with humans and other animals, to be nothing over and above facts about the basic consciousness of micro-level entities. Clearly we cannot make sense of this grounding claim in terms of grounding by subsumption: my mind and its consciousness are not aspects of the consciousness of any micro-level entity. Thus, this grounding claim must be made sense of in terms of grounding by truthmaking. I therefore interpret the micropsychist position as follows:

Truthmaker Micropsychism – The metaphysically privileged structure of reality consists entirely of facts involving micro-level entities instantiating very basic forms of consciousness, and perhaps certain other properties. These facts make true all other propositions, including propositions concerning o-consciousness, e.g. <Bill is feeling anxious>. Neither organic minds nor organic states of consciousness participate in the metaphysically privileged structure of reality. They are mere shadows cast by the structure of our discourse; just as sentences asserting the existence of parties merely communicate facts about people reveling, so sentences concerning how Bill is feeling and thinking merely serve to communicate facts about the consciousness of the micro-level entities in Bill's brain.

Micropsychism so construed is not a very plausible view. When I ask whether there is a party I am interested in whether people are reveling. But when I ask what it's like to be Bill I'm not interested in anything more fundamental than the o-subject that is Bill's conscious mind and its conscious states. This would be disputed by analytic behaviourists and functionalists, who hold that the function of propositions concerning consciousness is to convey information about behavioural functioning. Few people working on the mind-body problem these days accept this kind of view, and if you do accept this kind of view then you're going to have no motivation for trying to make sense of panpsychism. But once we deny analytic functionalism, there doesn't seem to be any other way of analyzing the truth-conditions of propositions concerning o-consciousness in more fundamental terms.

there's a deep intuition that certain entities, e.g. parties, exist in a lightweight sense and metaphysical elitism captures this.

It could be claimed that the truth-conditions of propositions concerning o-consciousness are not a priori accessible, as the reference of concepts referring to conscious states is determined by facts outside of our grasp. This is roughly the view defended by physicalists who endorse the ‘phenomenal concept strategy.’¹⁷ However, as in the case of analytic functionalism, endorsing the phenomenal concept strategy entails losing the motivation for panpsychism. If the truth-conditions of propositions about consciousness are not a priori accessible, then there can be no a priori grounds for denying that those truth-conditions concern purely physical properties. Of course, I do not take myself here to have given any reason to doubt the phenomenal concept strategy – I have tried to do this at length elsewhere.¹⁸ But panpsychism is a view one is attracted to because one is persuaded of the philosophical case against physicalism with which I started this essay; such a philosopher has already rejected the phenomenal concept strategy.

Perhaps there is some way of construing micropsychism other than the truthmaking account I have given above. However, this would require formulating some other account of grounding, an account that incorporates some other way of making sense of o-conscious minds being ‘nothing over and above’ facts about micro-level minds. I have found nothing like this in the literature so far, although to be fair the nature of the grounding relation has not thus far been much discussed in the panpsychism literature.

In the absence of some such alternative we should interpret micropsychism as I have construed it above. I submit that so construed it should be rejected. We can put the argument as follows:

The Absence of Analysis Argument

1. The metaphysical truth-conditions of propositions concerning o-consciousness are a priori accessible.
2. If micropsychism is true, then the metaphysical truth-conditions of propositions about o-consciousness concern micro-level conscious entities.
3. It is not plausible that there are a priori accessible metaphysical truth-conditions of propositions about o-consciousness that concern micro-level conscious entities.
4. Therefore, micropsychism is false.

I turn now to cosmopsychism. Cosmopsychism (in its constitutive form) is a combination of priority monism – discussed above – and panpsychism. On this view the universe considered as a whole is a conscious subject of some kind. All entities and properties, including organic conscious minds and

¹⁷ Loar 1990, Papineau 1998; Diaz-Leon 2010.

¹⁸ Goff 2011, 2015, 2017.

their conscious experiences, are aspects of the conscious universe. The conscious universe subsumes all things in its being.

Thus, cosmopsychism entails the possibility of *subject-subsuming subjects*, i.e. conscious subjects that are aspects of other conscious subjects. Such a thing can seem hard to make sense of. Certainly we cannot imagine such a thing by using our perceptual and/or introspective faculties. But nor can we imagine in this way a four-dimensional object, and we nonetheless take four-dimensional objects to be coherent.

The cosmopsychist can plausibly attribute our difficulty positively conceiving of a subject-subsuming subject to the fact that we don't fully grasp the nature of conscious subjects. Contra Descartes, there is no reason to think that the essential nature of a subject of experience is entirely a matter of its being a subject of experience. And indeed we have a couple of reasons for thinking that there is more to the nature of a conscious subject than its consciousness:

- Conscious subjects have causal powers, and yet the categorical nature of a conscious state does not seem to essentially involve causal power, as evidenced by the fact that epiphenomenalism is coherent. Therefore, if conscious subjects are causally efficacious, they must instantiate some non-phenomenal categorical nature that is involved in grounding the subject's causal powers.¹⁹
- If conscious subjects are material, then they are spatially extended. Yet Descartes was arguably correct that we cannot conceive of a Cartesian ego (i.e. creature whose nature is exhausted by consciousness) extended in space. Mere consciousness doesn't seem to be the kind of property that can, on its own, be 'spread out' through space.²⁰ This gives us reason to think that there must be some other nature to the conscious subject that is involved in grounding its spatial extension, some nature that 'thickens out' the subject and its consciousness.

I don't think these considerations point us to the idea that a conscious subject has other properties – extension and causal powers – that are distinct from and as it were sit alongside its consciousness. For this would entail that consciousness itself was epiphenomenal and lacked extension. Rather I think they point us to the supposition that there is a more expansive property, call it consciousness+, that subsumes consciousness as one aspect, enfolding conscious and non-conscious aspects in a single unified property. If we grasped the nature of consciousness+ we would understand that it is

¹⁹ I am assuming that causal powers are grounded in categorical properties. I argue for this in chapter 9 of Goff 2017.

²⁰ This point is defended in more detail in McGinn 1995.

an essentially extended, causally efficacious property; as it is we grasp only one aspect of that property.

Will we ever come to grasp the non-phenomenal aspects of consciousness? I am cautiously pessimistic. We know about the causal structure of matter through the way it impacts on our senses, and we know about (some of) the phenomenal properties instantiated by matter through direct acquaintance (i.e. we acquainted with the phenomenal properties instantiated by our own brains). But we don't seem to have a faculty through which to access the non-phenomenal categorical nature of matter. Derk Pereboom has speculated that we might reach a conception of such properties through theoretical imagination.²¹ Whilst I don't have an argument to conclusively rule this out, it seems to me about as likely as the possibility of a blind scientist imagining her way to a positive conception of phenomenal red. Certainly such a thing has no precedent in natural science, which has no interest in the non-phenomenal categorical nature of matter.

It is frustrating to be stuck with a theory which entails our (probably permanent) partial ignorance of the nature of matter. But I don't think the fact that a theory has this implication gives us any reason to doubt its truth. If we are the products of natural selection rather than intelligent design, then we should not expect to be blessed with the capacity to discover the complete fundamental nature of reality. In fact, we should be surprised we've got as far as we have. The success of natural science in the last five hundred years has caused many to be optimistic concerning the human capacity to unearth the secrets of nature. Such optimism is dampened when one appreciates that, from Galileo onwards, the physical sciences have focused exclusively on mapping the causal structure of matter. The fact that we have had great success working out how matter *behaves* does not give us a reason to think that we will one day uncover its intrinsic nature.²²

The crucial advantage of cosmopsychism, as opposed to micropsychism, is that it does not require a deflationary view of o-subjects and their experiences. According to cosmopsychism my consciousness is an aspect of the consciousness of the universe; this is consistent with supposing that my consciousness is part of the metaphysically privileged structure of reality. Similarly the cosmopsychist claim that my conscious mind (the substance rather than the property) is an aspect of the cosmic mind is consistent with the claim that my conscious mind is part of Reality as it is in and of itself. There is no inconsistency in holding that both a whole and its aspects are privileged.

The micropsychist can account for the facts that o-consciousness being nothing over and above the fundamental facts only if she holds that o-subjects and o-consciousness are mere shadows cast by

²¹ Pereboom 2011, 2015.

²² I have argued this point in more detail in Goff 2017, chapter 1.

the structure of our discourse. The cosmopsychist need not suppose this: facts about o-consciousness are subsumed within the fundamental facts about the conscious universe, and *this* accounts for the fact that facts about o-consciousness are nothing over and above the fundamental facts about the conscious universe.

In summary, I believe that micropsychism is, whilst cosmopsychism is not, reliant on a deflationary account of facts concerning human and animal experience, and that because of this the former is a much less plausible view than the latter. If we want to take advantage of the theoretical benefits of constitutive panpsychism, then we should embrace cosmopsychism.

Appendix: Demystifying Metaphysical Elitism

Some will be suspicious of the use of primitive notions in metaphysics which don't seem to have any analogue outside of metaphysics, such as the notion of 'metaphysical privilege' employed in this article. In response to this kind of worry, Sider tries to make the notion of metaphysical privilege 'earn its keep' by demonstrating its theoretical utility. However, Schaffer has persuasively argued that Sider fails to do this. Sider invests in a non-comparative notion of privilege – concepts either carve nature at the joints or they don't – whereas it is a comparative notion of privilege that seems to be needed for the theoretical uses to which Sider wants to put this notion, for example, in accounting for laws of nature and the determinacy of reference.²³

In what follows, I will try to demystify the notion of a metaphysically privileged notion of existence. I start from the idea that we have a primitive notion of 'basic existence': the kind of existence at play when we ask whether God or Platonic entities exist, the kind of existence we predicate of the fundamental entities in our metaphysical system. This simple notion of existence cannot be defined in more fundamental terms: we can say that for something to exist in this sense is for it to be 'real' or to be 'part of the world', but these are just different ways of saying the same thing.

Some philosophers may be suspicious of simple concepts, preferring a holistic view in which all concepts are inter-defined. There is not space to properly defend this here, but I find the holistic view hard to make sense of, especially when we appreciate that the circle of definition must eventually loop back on itself. Imagine a simple language which contains only four terms 'X', 'Y', 'Z' and 'R', which are defined as follows:

Xs are not identical to Ys and Ys are not identical to Zs.

²³ Schaffer 2014.

Xs are things that bear the R relation to Ys, Ys are things that bear the R relation to Zs, and Zs are things that bear the R relation to Xs.

The R relation is the relation that Xs bear to Ys, Ys bear to Zs, and Zs bear to Xs.

It seems clear that descriptions involving such terms could yield no positive understanding of reality beyond its bare structure. And the problem would not be addressed by expanding the number of terms. The language can yield no positive understanding of reality (beyond its structure) precisely because its terms are inter-defined. In order to understand what X, Ys and Zs are I need to know what relation R is; in order to understand what the R relation is I need to know what the Xs, Ys and Zs are. The cognitive buck is continually passed and nothing is ultimately grasped.

However, there are some primitive concepts involved in the above simple language: existence, numerical identity, negation, and the idea of a relation. It is because of the involvement of these concepts that the above language has the potential to provide information about the bare structure of a world. But now imagine that even these terms themselves are inter-defined. In so far as we can make sense of this, the result would be the elimination of any positive understanding of reality.

For these reasons I cannot see how we can avoid a foundationalist picture of our conceptual scheme. This does not mean returning to the dead end of logical atomism attempted in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Most of our concepts are rough and ready, vague, and have extensions determined by factors outside of our cognitive grasp. However, in so far as we have positive understanding of reality, that understanding must be built up out of simple concepts. And there are many plausible candidates: the modal notions of possibility and necessity (understood in their unqualified senses), number, identity, property, relation, and perhaps nomic notions such as causation or law of nature. The most general such simple concept, without which any understanding of reality would be impossible, is the simple notion of existence itself. This simple property I call 'basic' or 'privileged' existence.

One use of the verb to be and related expressions in natural language is to express basic existence. However, existence language is used in a much broader way. Consider the sentence 'There is a party at John's.' We don't use this sentence to state that there is some entity – a party – that has basic existence. We don't want to say that there is something – a party – that 'exists' in the way God 'exists' (if She does) or fundamental particles 'exist' (if they do). Rather we use that sentence to state that certain people are revelling. This is not to deny that the fact that there are people revelling may involve things that do have basic existence; the point is simply that the sentence does not assert the basic existence of *a party*.

Why do we use existence language in this much broader way? Because it is extremely useful. Perhaps in a society of metaphysicians it would be good to restrict uses of the verb to be only to expressions of basic existence; we would then have the language Cian Dorr dubbed ‘Ontologese’.²⁴ But metaphysics is by no means our primary aim in communication, and hence it would be senseless (and indeed practically impossible) to limit the use of existence talk in this way.

The fact that we use existence talk in a way that is broader than the way a community of metaphysicians would use it entails that the meaning of the word ‘existence’ (and related terms) in ordinary English is much broader than the meaning of the word ‘existence’ in Ontologese. The Ontologese sentence ‘There is a party’ is a bad translation of the English sentence ‘There is a party’. In Ontologese the word ‘existence’ expresses basic existence; in English ‘existence’ sometimes expresses basic existence – in sentences asserted the ‘existence’ of God and fundamental particles – and sometimes expresses another notion, let us call this other notion ‘secondary existence’ or ‘existences’.

We can understand what secondary existence is by reflecting on the use of existence talk in different contexts. We use the sentence ‘There is a party’ to express the fact that people are revelling; hence, for a party to exist_s is for it to be the case that there are people revelling. We use the sentence ‘There is a table at location L’ to state that there is a certain table-ish pattern of penetration resistance among certain regions of space; hence, for a table to exist_s is for the regions of space in question to instantiate a table-ish pattern of penetration resistance (resulting, for example, in my coffee cup not falling to the ground when I ‘put it down on the table’).²⁵ Reflection on such cases tells us all there is to know about what secondary existence is.

As metaphysicians we are not only interested in what things exist, but in their properties and relations. Things don’t just *exist*, they exist *in ways*. And thus if we have a notion of basic existence, we also have a notion of *forms of basic existence*, or *the ways in which things basically exist* (both intrinsic and relational). I take the notion of a form of basic existence to be equivalent to what – following David Lewis²⁶ – analytic philosophers call a ‘natural property’.

Just as not all uses of existence language express basic existence, so not all predications express forms of basic existence. I am inclined to think that determinate forms of consciousness are forms of

²⁴ Dorr 2005.

²⁵ I outline this analysis of macro-level material objects such as tables in more detail in 2.2.2 of Goff 2017. Strictly speaking, it is an analysis of table-shaped objects, as plausibly a material object can be a table only if it was designed to be one or is treated as one. I also offer in 2.2.2 a way of analysing higher-level physical natural kinds.

²⁶ Lewis 1983.

basic existence; if this is correct then predications of determinate consciousness express forms of basic existence. But the sentence 'Either Bill has determinate conscious state X or Bill has determinate conscious state Y' does not ascribe to Bill a form of basic existence; rather it claims that either Bill has form of basic existence X or he has form of basic existence Y. Just as extended uses of the language of existence create a secondary notion of 'existence', so extended uses of predication create a secondary notion of 'property'. As theorists of Reality we are interested not in properties per se, but in forms of basic existence.

By bringing together the metaphysically privileged sense of 'existence' and the metaphysically privileged sense of 'property' we reach a quite general notion of metaphysically privileged 'Reality' or the 'World-As-It-Is-In-And-Of-Itself'. Sometimes metaphysicians are interested in the shadows cast by our concepts, especially when those concepts hold deep significance for us (such as the concepts of knowledge, ethics or causation). But the primary focus of metaphysics is Reality itself.

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